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**OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY LETTER #75**

July 10, 2008

**TO:** Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services

**FROM:** Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director  
Office of Family Stability

**SUBJECT: Expanded Categorical Eligibility for Food Stamps**

On June 27, 2008, we placed into clearance proposed revisions to the rule regarding categorical eligibility for food stamp benefits. Since then questions have arisen about the policy and what it means for food stamp recipients and for county departments of job and family services. We appreciate the feedback and realize that further clarification of the proposed policy is needed.

For the past year, due to concerns about payment accuracy, the Office of Family Stability has been engaged in a review of Ohio's food stamp program policies and quality control procedures. Part of the review included holding eight focus group meetings around the state to gather feedback from county departments of job and family services on changes that we could explore that would improve the food stamp program for low income Ohioans and simplify the administration of the program for county agencies.

One of the recurring themes that came from the focus groups was the simplification of the resource test. Determining the correct application of the resource limit can be complicated, and mistakes can result in high dollar errors in quality control reviews. We also received feedback from advocacy groups that the resource test discourages people from saving and building assets to enable them to move toward self-sufficiency and out of poverty.

As a result, we are implementing a new policy that eliminates the resource limit for all food stamp assistance groups. This is the policy introduced in the proposed rule set forth in Clearance #6303 on June 27, 2008.

This policy is beneficial to all concerned - county agencies, caseworkers, and Ohioans in need:

- Food stamp application processing will be simplified and less error-prone.
- Clients applying for food stamp benefits will need less documentation and reporting requirements.
- Some currently unserved Ohioans will be able to receive food stamp benefits.

- There will be fewer high dollar case errors because resources will not be part of the quality control reviews.
- Applicants will be encouraged to seek out other forms of help available through the Ohio Benefit Bank.

The proposed revisions to the categorical eligibility rule included changing the name of the food stamp program to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 enacted by Congress renames the food stamp program the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), effective October 1, 2008. On a national level, all references to the food stamp program will be changed to SNAP. While states may choose to adopt a different name, the name "food stamps" will become obsolete. States may gradually phase-in the name change. We have withdrawn the use of the name SNAP from the categorical eligibility rule to avoid confusion. We will re-introduce the name change at a later date.

Attached is a series of questions and answers that are intended to clarify the new categorical eligibility policy. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Beth Kowalczyk, [beth.kowalczyk@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:beth.kowalczyk@jfs.ohio.gov).

JC: bk

Attachment

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